New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage

By Danel W. Bachman

For a century and a third members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have believed and taught that polygyny, or the practice of having multiple wives, originated in an inspired doctrine revealed by God to Joseph Smith, founder of the faith. From the severe persecutions in Nauvoo, Illinois, until the Woodruff Manifesto in 1890 which interdicted the practice, plural marriage was one of the central issues of Mormonism. Even to our own day no doctrine has created more controversy, and until recently no document, excepting perhaps the Book of Mormon, has stirred more dispute than has the revelation on eternal and plural marriage known as Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. Mormon intellectual history is still in its infancy; therefore, despite arguments surrounding both the document and the doctrine, little effort has been made to study the origins of either.

Most writings on the subject conveniently fall into one or more of three classifications. The earliest were exposés, typified by John C. Bennett's pace-setting *History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism.*[1] A

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[1]Bennett's work was the first true book-length attempt to expose plural marriage. Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt have isolated main themes of ante-bellum fiction about the Mormons, one of which was the image of the "depraved beast." The image was highly sexual in nature. It is very likely that this notion was popularized by Bennett. See their "The Missouri and Illinois Mormons in Ante-Bellum Fiction," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 5 (Spring 1970):48.

Representatives of this type of literature from disaffected or expelled Mormons are: Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy in Utah: A Lady's Life Among the Mormons* (New York: American News Co., 1872); Increase McGee Van Dusen, *The Mormon Endowment: Secret Drama; or, Conspiracy in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846; to Which is Added a Sketch of the Life of Joseph Smith...*

second genre best described as polemical grew mainly out of intra-church controversies over succession in the Mormon presidency. Intemperate in tone and spirit, the literature of this debate reveals that the issue of plural marriage was often adopted as an aid in the erection of theological bulwarks behind which each side sought to defend its interests and within which they found self-justifying security. This exchange of views has not distinguished itself by objective and analytical sophistication.[2]

In recent years some historians and sociologists have produced more objective studies of plural marriage. Nevertheless, a serious gap remains in our understanding of the birth of the doctrine and its practice among the Saints. This is the result of these authors' proclivity to focus on the Utah period, for which resources and data are abundant. Therefore, presumably because of the scarcity of information and the difficulty of the task, the genesis of the principle has received perfunctory treatment.[3] For example, as late as 1954 Kimball Young, in reference to his inquiry into the inception of plural marriage said, "The precise steps in its emergence are almost impossible to trace, as this chapter will make clear." The most eloquent commentary of the chapter was its size; in a book of over 470 pages, one chapter of 21 pages was devoted to the "origin and development of Mormon polygamy: official and otherwise."[4]

Little has been done since that time. Even Lawrence Foster, in an admirable study recently completed, failed to give this earlier period the investigation it requires. Foster acknowledges the importance of the New York and Ohio eras to Mormonism's formative processes, but he concedes that he has "not worked extensively with manuscript material from the period." Thus, Foster finds plural marriage spawned in the social and religious waters of Nauvoo.[5] Close

(Syracuse: N. M. D. Lathrop, 1847). Others from non-Mormons include: John Bowes, *Mormonism Exposed in Its Swindling and Licentious Abominations, Refuted in its Principles, and in the Claims of its Head, the Modern Mohammed Joseph Smith, Who is Proved to Have Been a Deceiver, and No Prophet of God* (London: E. Ward, 1849); John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857); John H. Beadle, *Polygamy; or, The Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism* (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Co., 1882); and Wilhelm W. Wyl, *Mormon Portraits; or, The Truth About the Mormon Leaders, 1830-1860* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886).

[2]The most important representative of LDS publications is Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement, and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1950); and more recently Paul E. Reimann, *Plural Marriage Limited* (Salt Lake City: Paul Reimann, 1974). Typical RLDS publications are : Joseph Smith III, *Plural Marriage in America: A Critical Examination* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing, n.d.); Smith's *One Wife Or Many* (Lamoni: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, n.d.), and his *Reply to Orson Pratt* (Plano, Ill.: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, n.d.); Jason W. Briggs, *The Basis of Brighamite Polygamy* (Lamoni: Reorganized Church of Christ, n.d.).

[3]See Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954); Gustive Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1971); and Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942).

[4]Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* p. 82.

[5]William Lawrence Foster, "Between Two Worlds: The Origins of Shaker Celibacy, Oneida Community Complex Marriage, and Mormon Polygamy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1976), pp. 213, n.1, 222-23. Foster refers to Ohio polygamy as a "pilot" effort and as "premature" and says evidence for it is "slight." Although he is aware of most of the evidence and finds considerable concern over the evils of sexual sin and family disorganization expressed in the Book of Mormon (see p. 205), he looks to the social conditions in Nauvoo as factors "making possible the introduction of new doctrinal and social patterns."

examination of the subject, however, suggests that the roots of Mormon marital hierology, including eternal and plural marriage, are found in Ohio. This article is an attempt to probe those roots. First, we shall examine evidence within the revelation on eternal and plural marriage for information regarding its origin, then we shall turn our attention to the existence of some of the concepts taught therein in Ohio Mormonism.

I

The story of the recording of Section 132 on 12 July 1843 sworn to by William Clayton and Joseph Kingsbury and repeated by many others is too familiar to need repeating here.[6] Suffice it to say that the basic elements of the story — the recording of the revelation by Clayton, the second copy made by Kingsbury, the conditions of marital disharmony in the Prophet's household, and the subsequent reading of the revelation before the Nauvoo High Council one month later on 12 August 1843 — have all received important corroboration and confirmation by recent research. A brief review of such evidence would include: verification of the time the revelation was written from both Joseph Smith's and William Clayton's journals; the location of the Kingsbury manuscript copy of the revelation in the LDS Church Archives and verification of its autography; testimony both privately written and in affidavit form from many on the high council who heard the revelation read before that body, including the interesting story of three separate affidavits from the disaffected Leonard Soby, one-time member of the high council; and additional support from the 12 August 1843 minutes of the high council. To this should be added notices in the Nauvoo newspapers about the revelation and contemporary letters

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[6]Kingsbury left two affidavits attesting to his experience. The first was sworn to 7 March 1870 and can be found in Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Book 2, p. 18, and Book 3, p. 18, Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter referred to as Church Archives). The second was written on 22 May 1886. The original is in a folder of affidavits and statements regarding plural marriage in the Church Archives vault. Further evidence of his authorship can be found in his testimony before the Circuit Court of the United States at Kansas City in the early 1890s. See *In the Circuit Court of the United States, Western District of Missouri, Western Division, at Kansas City. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Complaintant vs. The Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri: . . . Complaintant's Abstract of Pleading and Evidence* (Lamoni: Herald Publishing House and Bindery, 1893), p. 342. Clayton's testimony can be found in his letter to Madison M. Scott, 11 November 1871, Church Archives; and in his Affidavit, 16 February 1874, Vault Folder, Church Archives, and published in the *Deseret Evening News*, 20 March 1886. See also the remarks by Joseph F. Smith and John Taylor at the funeral of Clayton in the *Deseret Evening News*, 9 December 1879, quoted in Paul Dahl, *William Clayton: Missionary, Pioneer, and Public Servant* (Provo: J. Grant Stevenson, 1964), pp. 218-32.

Regarding the Smith Collection of affidavits, the following information may be helpful: While examining two separate collections in the Church Archives the author found four small record books kept by Joseph F. Smith. Three were housed in his collection and the fourth was in a collection of affidavits and statements in the archives vault. Apparently Smith began the collection of these affidavits and statements in 1869 when Alexander Hale Smith and David Hyrum Smith, sons of Joseph Smith, came to Salt Lake City on a proselytizing mission for the RLDS church. They were denying that their father taught or practiced plural marriage. Joseph F. Smith collected these statements from personal witnesses to refute these missionaries. Two of the three books in the Smith collection have identifying marks. The third one and the one in the vault have none. For convenience I have designated them as follows. The book titled "40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage" is designated Book 1, the book designated as Book "2" will retain this number, and the unmarked one will be referred to as Book 3. The book in the vault will be designated Book 4. There are duplications in these volumes and it appears that two were intended as duplicates, but there are also unique items in each one.

from Nauvooans regarding many of these and other related issues.[7] Detailed discussion of these things would demonstrate the validity of Foster's comment that there is sufficient information so that we can move beyond the question of whether Joseph did or did not introduce polygamy to the question of how and why he did it.[8]

Despite the obvious Nauvoo origin of the document itself, Mormons have long held the notion that Joseph Smith received revelations on the subject of eternal and plural marriage during the early Kirtland period. Joseph B. Noble, a close friend of the Prophet, said that the doctrine was revealed to Smith "while he was engaged in the work of translation of the Scriptures."[9] This ambiguous statement leaves one wondering which of Joseph's translation endeavors he meant. Over the years theories linking the revelations on plural marriage with the translation of the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, and with the revision of the Bible have been proposed. But secondhand reports of statements from Brigham Young and W. W. Phelps which associate the reception of these revelations with the first two translations, respectively, are problematical.[10] The most persistent hypothesis, proposed and promulgated by H. H. Bancroft and B. H. Roberts, is that Smith's work on the revision of the Bible was the catalyst for the revelations.[11]

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[7]Detailed information on these topics can be found in my thesis, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith" (M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975), pp. 204-16.

[8]Foster, "Between Two Worlds," p. 194, n. 1. Foster repeated this comment in a paper read at Lamoni, Iowa, to the John Whitmer Historical Association on 25 September 1976, pp. 1-2. Copy in possession of the author.

[9]This is from the minutes of the Davis Stake conference published under the title "Plural Marriage" in the *Millennial Star* 16:454. Additional testimony about the 1831-32 origin of the doctrine can be found in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," pp. 59-68.

[10]The statement attributed to Brigham Young that the revelation on plural marriage came while Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon comes from the 26 July 1872 entry of the Charles Walker Diary, Church Archives. This is the only statement known to the author that attributes the reception of the revelation to that period. Most of the pertinent statements in the Book of Mormon inveigh against the doctrine of plural marriage. A careful reading of Jacob 2:22-30 may have generated a question in Smith's mind, but there is no known evidence that this is the case. The possibility that the plural "families" in Ether 1:41 may have also given rise to a question is negated by the fact that this is a typographical error in modern editions. See Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith and Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., 1966), p. 27.

The Phelps statement is reported in T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), p. 182, but is unacceptable for three reasons. First, most reliable witnesses, including Phelps himself, point to the 1831 date as correct. Since the papyrus did not come into Smith's hands until 1835, they could not have initiated his question. Secondly, Stenhouse was obviously unaware of the absence of any relevance between the Book of Abraham and the first paragraph of Section 132 when he claimed that the introduction of polygamy was "much more correctly traceable to those Egyptian mummies than to a revelation" because "the first paragraph of the revelation has all the musty odour of the catacombs about it." Thirdly, Stenhouse said that Brigham Young was present at Phelps's speech and was "much annoyed" by his statements because, suggests Stenhouse, Phelps was divulging the "real secret." A more likely reason for Young's anger may have been the fact that a year before the speech he received a letter from Phelps reporting a revelation on plural marriage given to Joseph Smith in the year 1831. See William W. Phelps to Brigham Young, 12 August 1861, Church Archives.

[11]The earliest statements of this theory known to the author are Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft Co., 1889), p. 161; and Brigham H. Roberts's introduction to volume five of the history of Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960), 5:xxix.

Implicit in the Mormon concept of revelation is the idea that divine communications come in response to prophetic inquiries. In nearly all cases where it is known, a study of the historical background of Smith's revelations discloses a situation which generated a question that brought forth a specific revelation. In some cases revelations answer more than one question.[12] Regardless, the queries nearly always have a direct relationship with the immediate historical situation encountered by the Prophet. Statements by Joseph Smith, combined with a close scrutiny of the revelation on eternal and plural marriage, show that it follows this pattern.

Section 132 answers at least three separate questions which Joseph Smith asked the Lord; two are explicitly mentioned in the revelation itself. Verse one clearly states that Joseph wanted to know and understand why the ancient patriarchs and prophets were justified in having plural wives. The second, a query about adultery, is referred to in verse forty-one. Knowledge of the third question is derived from a clear but ungrammatical report of a statement by Joseph Smith in 1844 to the Nauvoo city council then deliberating the fate of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. One of the main charges of the *Expositor* was that Mormon leaders taught and practiced polygamy; it also contained affidavits verifying that a revelation on the subject existed and was read both publically and privately.[13] In the city council meeting on 8 June 1844, Joseph Smith explained that a portion of the revelation came when he inquired "concerning the passage in the resurrection [*sic*] concerning 'they neither marry nor are given in marriage, &c.' "[14] This obviously refers to passages in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew (or parallels) which detail a confrontation between Jesus and the Sadducees over the doctrine of the resurrection. The unbelieving Sadducees described a woman who under the Levirate law had seven husbands but died without issue. Their interrogatory, "in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?" brought forth from Jesus the response that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." This reply apparently piqued the Prophet's curiosity.

As shall be seen below, it is likely that each of these questions arose under different circumstances and at separate times. Nevertheless, Section 132 is a deft amalgamation of the answers to each into a cohesive unity. It is significant that the material immediately following verse one *does not* answer the question therein about the patriarchs. The name of Abraham or any of the ancients is not mentioned until verse twenty-nine. That verse and those following to verse

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[12]Examples of the amalgamation of separate revelations, or more than one question being answered in a single document, include the following: Sections 20 and 22 were originally published together in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, 1 (June 1832): 1-2; Section 23 was originally five separate sections in the Book of Commandments; Section 27 was two separate communications given in August and September 1830, respectively, according to Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:106; Sections 77 and 113 are question and answer sections; Section 88 is two communications separated at the end of verse 126, the original portion given 27 December 1832 and the latter portion given 3 January 1833 and published as such in *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (March 1833): 6; and, finally, Sections 130 and 131 are obvious compilations.

[13]*Nauvoo Expositor*, 7 June 1844. See especially the "Preamble" and the affidavits of William and Jane Law and Austin Cowles on pp. 1-2.

[14]*Nauvoo Neighbor*, 19 June 1844. Foster says that there was an "Extra" of the paper on 17 June 1844, but the author has not examined a copy of that. See Foster, "Between Two Worlds," p. 205, n. 2.

thirty-nine *do answer* the question by explaining that the conduct of the ancients was justified because their marriages were sanctioned by divine revelation and were performed by proper authority. Verses two through twenty-eight deal with the third question about marriage in heaven. Lengthy verse seven lays down a general principle regarding the efficacy of any contract or covenant in the postmortal world. If the conditions are not met then they "are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead." Verses fifteen to nineteen apply this principle to three specific cases of marriage. The first, in verse fifteen, concerns a marriage that is not performed according to these conditions. The revelation declares, "they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world." Then, in almost the exact language of Matthew's gospel, the revelation says in verse sixteen:

> Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

Well might Joseph Smith tell the Nauvoo city council that in answer to his question he learned that "men in this life must marry in view of eternity, otherwise they must remain as angels, or be single in heaven."[15]

The primary issue is, when and why did Joseph ask these questions? There is very little in the Nauvoo situation immediately preceeding the recording of the revelation that can be discerned which may have prompted questions one and three, but conditions in Ohio were ripe. The second question leaves considerable doubt as to the reasons that caused it to arise in the Prophet's mind.

We learn from the helpful research of Robert Matthews, that while in Kirtland in 1831, Joseph Smith was revising those portions of the Bible that may have aroused his curiosity regarding the patriarchs and the problem of marriage in the resurrection. Moreover, Matthews asserts that such questioning was one of the primary reasons Smith was directed to revise the Bible. It was a sort of tutorial experience for him and he was promised that if he would ask the scriptures would be given to him in their fulness.[16] Joseph Smith revised the pertinent portions of Genesis dealing with Abraham's plural wives between February and March of 1831, and by 26 September 1831 had completed Matthew.[17] Thus, given Joseph's native inquisitiveness as shown on several other occasions,[18] and the purpose for the revision, there was sufficient stimulus for him to ask questions at this time about marriage.

This was also the most prolific period in the Prophet's lifetime for the writing of revelations. Of the 136 sections in the present LDS Doctrine and Covenants, 64 sections or 47 per cent were recorded in Ohio from 1831 to 1837, and 1831 led all other years with 37 revelations received, 25 of which were in

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[15]*Nauvoo Neighbor*, 19 June 1844.

[16]Doctrine and Covenants, Section 42:56-61. See also Robert J. Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation": Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), pp. 264-65.

[17]*Ibid*, pp. 64-67.

[18]For example, in translating the Book of Mormon he was led to inquire about baptism, the three witnesses, and the fate of John the Revelator.

Ohio. During the period he worked on the revision of the Bible, from July 1830 to June 1833, 75 revelations or 56.6 per cent of the total were recorded.[19] This then lends considerable credence to the Matthews hypothesis and increases the likelihood that the doctrines of eternal and plural marriage were revealed in this period.

Some of the early revelations received in Ohio confirm the Prophet's interest in marriage in the new church. One can be shown to have been influenced by the revision of the Bible, and collectively they add weight to the arguments advanced thus far. The proximity of a nearby Shaker community with its practice of celibacy led to the reception of Section 49 in March 1831. Among its contrasts between Shaker doctrine and the fulness of the restored gospel is one of the first significant doctrinal statements regarding the purpose of marriage.[20] Section 74, received in January 1832, answers a specific question relative to Paul's counsel about marriage to the Corinthians; the connection between this document and the revision of the Bible is virtually certain.[21] In addition to these communications, others record yet more revelations to Smith on marriage in this period. His nephew Joseph F. Smith reported, on unknown authority, that during 1831 Joseph saw his future plural wives in vision. And W. W. Phelps said that while in Missouri in the spring of 1831 the Prophet received a revelation teaching the doctrine of miscegenation with Indian women. According to Phelps, this was only practical in the context of plural marriage since those to whom the revelation was given were already married men.[22]

The historical situation which spawned the question about adultery is more difficult to pin down. It is possible, of course, that Joseph's curiosity about the meaning of adultery arose during his work with the difficult teachings of Jesus on that subject in the New Testament. However, the answer to this question is in close proximity to and may be connected with passages which obviously refer to the 1843 Nauvoo situation. What occurred in Nauvoo that may justify this association? First, there was the Bennett scandal of 1842 which brought to the fore the issues of plural marriage and adultery. Then there was the problem of undivorced people with bad marriages who wanted permission to remarry without a divorce.[23] There was also considerable criticism from Gentiles about

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[19]See Earl Olson, "The Chronology of the Ohio Revelations," *Brigham Young University Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 329, 332-33.

[20]Doctrine and Covenants, Section 49: 16-17.

[21]It is significant that this revelation deals with the problem of family difficulties created when members marry non-members. This is one aspect of a larger problem of family disorganization and the evils of sexual sin that are such prominent concerns in the Book of Mormon, and which were also important social concerns in America. See n. 5 above. Matthews attributes this section to the revision of the Bible; see *"A Plainer Translation,"* p. 256.

[22]William W. Phelps to Brigham Young, 12 August 1861, Church Archives. Discussions of the document and its significance can be found in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," pp. 68-73, and Foster, "Between Two Worlds," pp. 209-11. Foster notes that this doctrine may also be related to the problem of unsatisfactory marital alliances in the church. It seems significant that the rationale for marrying Lamanite (Indian) women was that they were more virtuous than the gentile women, which also suggests that sexual evils of the day were an important concern.

[23]Examples of this situation were found in the Minutes of the Nauvoo High Council, Church Archives. See Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," pp. 129-33. For

the rumors of plural marriage in Nauvoo; and doubts existed in the minds of some of Joseph's trusted leaders.[24] Any or all of these things may have impelled Smith to seek further light on the subject. But a very probable stimulant for the question may have involved the Prophet's own domestic difficulties. In verses fifty-one to fifty-six, Emma Smith is commanded to accept those women that her husband has already married. She is also told to cleave unto him and "none else" and to forgive him his trespasses against her. Given the fact that Emma was never reconciled to the matter of plural marriage, is it possible that accusations of adultery came from her? According to William Clayton there was considerable tension in the Smith home at the time of the recording of Section 132. He reported in his journal that Joseph told him when Emma came back from St. Louis in the spring of that year that she rejected the principle of plural marriage totally and threatened to divorce him if he did not give it up.[25]

So Section 132 appears to be an amalgamation of several separate communications to Joseph Smith, each given at separate times and under different circumstances. Two portions of it probably originated in Ohio and a third in Illinois. The data presented in this section relative to the number of questions, their location, nature, origin, and the verses which answer them are summarized in Table I.

II

The hypothesis that Mormon eternal and plural marriage had its origins in Ohio is reinforced by events there, for much of what went on in the Kirtland years regarding marriage, sex, and the family was harmonious with principles outlined in Section 132. The elaborate superstructure of marital hierology initiated in Kirtland was also practically implemented there as well as later transferred to Nauvoo. Two specific instances demonstrate this point. First, theologically, Section 132 meshes with Smith's earliest statements on marriage, and they are consistent with the general development of Mormon theology during the period. Second, Joseph possessed a unique conception of his prophetic authority, and his exercise of that authority in performing marriages

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additional insight into the early attitudes on divorce see Lawrence Foster, "A Little Known Defense of Polygamy from the Mormon Press in 1842," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 9 (Winter 1974): pp. 21-34.

[24]Men like Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Lorenzo Snow overcame their doubts, but others such as William Law, William Marks, Leonard Soby, and Austin Cowles (the latter three in the leadership of the Nauvoo Stake) were overcome by their doubts. See Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," pp. 181-89, 213-14.

[25]William Clayton, Journal, 16 August 1843, as quoted in a certificate signed by Joseph F. Smith, John Henry Smith, and Robert L. Campbell in Smith, Affidavit Book 1, p. 68. True to his purpose of combating the RLDS opponents of plural marriage, Joseph F. Smith had this extract copied from Clayton's journal and verified by witnesses. The whereabouts of the original 1842-44 Clayton journal is problematical. It is not in the LDS Church Archives, yet the various quotes from it such as this one and others by George A. Smith, B. H. Roberts, and Joseph Fielding Smith (all Church Historians) are ample proof of its existence. General opinion seems to be that this may be one of the most important diaries extant from early Mormon history because, as Smith's secretary, Clayton was privy to so much that went on. Moreover, he was prone to record in detail that which he knew and experienced as is evidenced by the few extracts published. See also, William Clayton, *William Clayton's Journal: A Daily Record of the Original Company of "Mormon" Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Salt Lake City: Clayton Family Association, 1921), and James B. Allen and Thomas G. Alexander, eds., *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton, 1840 to 1842* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1974).

TABLE 1
QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY SECTION 132

LOCATION OF QUESTION	NATURE OF THE QUESTION	POSSIBLE CAUSE OF THE QUESTION	VERSES ANSWERING THE QUESTION
132:1	Justification of the ancients in practicing polygamy	*Kirtland*: Revision of Genesis, and other Old Testament passages relating to plural marriages of the ancients *Nauvoo*: Unknown	132:29-40
132:41	"as ye have asked concerning adultery"	*Kirtland*: Revision of biblical passages on adultery. *Nauvoo*: Contemporary events in Nauvoo	132:41-50 (?)[26]
Nauvoo Neighbor 19 June 1844	The meaning of Christ's reply to the problem posed by the Sadducees Matt. 22:23-30 and parallels.)	*Kirtland*: Revision of Matthew 22 and/or parallels. *Nauvoo*: Unknown	132:2-28

in Ohio was compatible with Section 132 and foreshadowed similar usages in Nauvoo.

Society and culture in the United States were greatly modified in the era between the Revolution and the Civil War. Many Americans were politically, religiously, and philosophically ambivalent.[27] Mormonism, one of the few

[26]It is difficult to determine exactly where the discussion about adultery terminates. If, as the possibility was raised in the text, Emma was the source of the charge, then verses 51 through 66 may also be part of the answer. On the other hand, the verses directed to Emma Smith may have been a separate communication, therefore the ambiguity.

[27]Among the most prominent of the rose-colored interpretations is Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965). Examples which evaluate the conflict are: Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Douglas T. Miller, *The Birth of Modern America, 1820-1850* (New York: Western Publishing Co., 1970); and Fred Somkin, *Unquiet Eagle: Memory and Desire in the Idea of American Freedom, 1815-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

religions to emerge and survive this schizophrenic time, mirrored some of the countercurrents of the day. It was at once utopian and traditional. For different reasons it appealed to and offended both optimists and naysayers. Smith's mixture of liberal and conservative thinking exhibits a dualistic nature that was typical of Mormonism as well as the larger society. The same forces which helped mold Mormonism also sculpted the doctrine of eternal and plural marriage.

As Mormon doctrine developed, this tendency to mingle the old and new, the radical and traditional, is particularly evident in weaving Old Testament concepts into the restoration of Christianity. Joseph Smith may have reached back two millennia to the original Christian era for his inspiration, but the theology which emerged in New York and Ohio exhibited heavy reliance on the Old Testament. For example, the Book of Mormon is a mixture of pre- and post-Christian dispensations, and the Old Testament ideal of a theocracy undergirds the Mormon idea of the kingdom of God. Likewise, the temple, with its washings, anointings, and covenants, had its inception in the Old Testament milieu.

Similarly, Mormonism's ideas on sex roles, marriage, and the family reflect a strong Old Testament flavor. The Mormon male role as priesthood bearer and father hearkened back to the patriarchs and prophets for many of its examples. In patriarchal-fashion, men were to receive divine guidance for their families and their stewardships, and through the priesthood they were to rule in righteousness. In 1831 Joseph Smith made it clear that women, being without the priesthood, were not the proper receptacles of revelation for the church or the family.[28]

The role of women and the basic purposes of marriage were captured in the revelation received in Kirtland in March 1831 previously referred to. In opposition to Shaker celibacy, and reminiscent of biblical language, it stated:

> Whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man. Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation; and that the world might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.[29]

Some Kirtlanders learned that marriage, including plural marriage, would persist into eternity and that this principle was prerequisite to man's exaltation to the status of godhood. Oliver Olney remembered that it was whispered around Kirtland that the "ancient order" or polygamy which existed in the days of Solomon and David "will eventually be again." On 26 May 1835, W. W. Phelps shared in a letter a "new idea" with his wife, Sally. "If you and I continue faithful to the end," he wrote, "we are certain to be one in the Lord throughout eternity;

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[28]Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1: 154. Some radical practicalities were extended to them, however. Before the church was organized, a divine directive declared that church officers were to be sustained by "common consent" of the people. All available evidence indicates that early Mormon women exercised this prerogative of religious franchise. Ibid., pp. 60-61; Doctrine and Covenants, Section 20: 63-65.

[29]Doctrine and Covenants, Section 49: 15-17.

this is one of the most glorious consolations we can have in the flesh."[30] A month later Phelps publically taught the same concept in the church newspaper *Messenger and Advocate*:

> We shall by and by learn that we were with God in another world, before the foundation of the world, and had our agency: that we came into this world and have our agency, in order that we may prepare ourselves for a kingdom of glory; become archangels, even the sons of God where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord.[31]

Benjamin F. Johnson provided a good summary of Mormon marriage doctrine as he understood it in Kirtland:

> The first Command was to "Multiply" and the Prophet taught us that Dominion & power in the great Future would be Commensurate with the no [number] of "Wives children and friends" that we inherit here and that our great mission to earth was to organize a Nuculi of Heaven to take with us. To the increase of which there would be no end.[32]

The Prophet's conceptualization of an authoritarian priesthood also had its roots in the Old Testament. Although the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods were restored by New Testament figures, the fulness of the authority, power, and doctrines of these priesthoods was revealed in the Kirtland temple in March 1836 by Moses, Elias, and Elijah. Elijah brought the all-important sealing powers, which meant that whatever the Prophet bound or loosed on earth would be bound or loosed in heaven. What was not done by this authority was not of eternal duration. Section 132 teaches that one of the ultimate purposes of the sealing power is to bind husbands, wives, and children together for eternity. Significantly, this idea was presaged in Kirtland.

As early as April 1830 Joseph Smith refused to accept baptisms performed in other churches on the basis of a revelation that declared "all old covenants . . . to be done away." They were "dead works."[33] The plural "covenants" suggests that more than baptism was involved. In Kirtland the Prophet's extension of the necessity for priesthood authority in other important social realms was consistent with this revelation. For example, in Ohio he anticipated and began to give substance to a theocratical kingdom of God which was based on legitimate authority. To Smith the power of God's agents transcended what he considered the usurped civil authority of the day.

By 1835 these authoritarian tendencies were evident in the Ohio community. That year Sidney Rigdon was indicted for "solemnizing marriages without a license." During the height of the Kirtland apostasy the right to perform marriages was again at issue. The day after Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled Kirtland the Prophet's father was arrested and charged with illegally marrying a couple. Apparently the elder Smith and other Mormons deliberately

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[30]W. W. Phelps to Sally, 26 May 1835, as quoted in Walter Dean Bowen, "The Versatile W. W. Phelps — Mormon Writer, Educator and Pioneer" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958), p. 68.

[31]*Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* 1 (June 1835): 130.

[32]Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, 1903, Church Archives.

[33]Doctrine and Covenants, Section 22: 1, 3.

violated a restrictive interpretation of the Ohio marriage statute which refused to recognize the Mormon priesthood. The priesthood viewed this interpretation as unconstitutional and an imposition on their divine authority. J. C. Dowmen, a Kirtland justice of the peace, said that he married Mormon couples who were later remarried by the Prophet in church rites.[34] This assertion remains unsubstantiated at present, but it is known that Joseph Smith exerted his authority over the civil law on at least two occasions in Ohio. These two marriages betoken similar exercises of authority in Nauvoo and they also illustrate the Prophet's concern for ancient patterns and orders.

The first instance was the marriage of Lydia Goldthwait Baily and Newel Knight. At the age of seventeen Lydia married Calvin Baily and bore him two children, but each died soon after birth. "Baily," said Knight, "turned out to be a drunkard unworthy of a wife; letting her suffer and pine in sorrow, while he was carousing and spending even the availes [*sic*] of the last cow."[35] So Lydia left him and joined some friends in Canada where she accepted Mormonism in the fall of 1833. She moved to Kirtland in May 1835 and there met and fell in love with Knight who proposed marriage. Lydia recalled that Hyrum Smith wanted Seymour Brunson to officiate at the wedding because his authority as a minister had been accepted in southern Ohio. When Joseph Smith interferred, desiring to perform the wedding himself, Hyrum expressed concern about the danger this might create for the Prophet. Nevertheless, the marriage was solemnized by him on Tuesday, 23 November 1835. Knight wrote that "during the evening President Smith said many things relative to marriages anciently, which were yet to be revealed."[36]

Accounts of the wedding and Smith's remarks relative to it illustrate this emphasis on the primacy of the priesthood and show that several of the elements of what would later be called eternal marriage were formulating in the Prophet's mind. The Prophet wrote,

> I then remarked that marriage was an institution of heaven, instituted in the garden of Eden; that it was necessary it should be solemnized by the authority of the everlasting priesthood. The ceremony was original with me, and in substance as follows — You covenant to be each other's companions through life, and discharge the duties of husband and wife in every respect, to which they assented. I then pronounced upon them the blessings that the Lord conferred upon Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, that is, to multiply and replenish the earth, with the addition of long life and prosperity.[37]

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[34] J. C. Dowmen, Statement, 2 January 1885, located in the Arthur B. Deming Collection, Chicago Historical Society. Dowmen's caustic comments about spiritual wifery and polygamy in Kirtland seem to reflect the situation in Nauvoo better than we understand it to have been in Ohio, and he may have been confusing rumors of the Nauvoo period with his remembrances of the Mormon era in Ohio. However, it is less likely that this would apply to his own actions in Kirtland.

[35] Newel Knight, "Sketch," p. 5, Church Archives.

[36] Ibid., p. 6.

[37] Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 2: 320. Note the similarity of this language to the reports of the plural marriage ceremony. See, Bennett, *History of the Saints*, p. 224, and Melissa Wells's testimony, *In the Circuit Court*, p. 314. These should be compared with the words used by N. K. Whitney as he married his daughter to Joseph Smith, and which he said were given to him by revelation through Joseph Smith. These remarks appear to be blessings bestowed after the formal covenant making. Revelation to Newel K. Whitney through Joseph Smith, 27 July 1842, Church Archives, and partially published in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., 1973), p. 23.

Knight also recorded Smith's remarks on the following Sunday in defense of his defiance of the law. "I have done it," he said,

> by the authority of the holy Priesthood, and the Gentile law has no power to call me to an account for it. It is my religious privilege, and even the Congress of the United States has no power to make a law that would abridge the rights of my religion. I have done as I was commanded, and I know the Kingdom of God will prevail, and the Saints will triumph over all their adversaries.[38]

Smith's action takes on even more significance regarding the rights of the priesthood when it is known that Lydia Baily was never granted a legal divorce from her first husband.[39]

On 20 January 1836 Joseph Smith married Apostle John F. Boynton and Susan Lowell. After a hymn and prayer, the Prophet "arose and read aloud a license, (according to the law of the land) granting any minister of the Gospel the privilege of solemnizing the rights of matrimony." He alluded to the ancient order of marriage, then "pronounced upon them the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and such other blessings as the Lord put into my heart." Reminiscing about the pleasantries of the celebration that followed, he commented, "I doubt whether the pages of history can boast of a more splendid and innocent wedding and feast than this, for it was conducted after the order of heaven, which has a time for all things."[40]

In 1843 Benjamin Winchester was tried for his membership in Nauvoo because of his difficulties over the authoritarian nature of the church. He later remembered that about 1835 "there was a good deal of scandal prevalent" in Kirtland about the Prophet's "licentious conduct" with two or three families. In self-defense, said Winchester, Joseph asserted that "he was God's prophet . . . and that he could do whatever he should choose to do, therefore the Church had no right to call into question anything he did."[41] According to Winchester this doctrine created a great sensation and a large portion of the original membership withdrew from the church. While it is likely that Winchester was projecting some of his bitterness into the narrative, similar comments about the Kirtland situation were made by Benjamin F. Johnson and John Whitmer.[42]

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[38]Newell Knight, "Sketch", p. 6. Lydia's version is: "Our Elders have been wronged and prosecuted for marrying without a license. The Lord God of Israel has given me authority to unite the people in the holy bonds of matrimony. And from this time forth I shall use that privilege and marry whomsoever I see fit." Homespun, (Pseud.) "Lydia Knight's History," *The First Book of Noble Women's Lives Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), p. 31.

[39]Knight, "Sketch," p. 6. "But," said Knight, "I prayed to the Lord and then took President Smith's Council [*sic*], [and] was married to her." This incident stands in contrast to Oliver Cowdery's rebuke of James Carrel on 25 January 1836 for "urging himself into the society of a young female while he yet had a living wife." See Leonard J. Arrington, "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, 'Sketch Book,' " *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 420.

[40]Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:377-78.

[41]Benjamin Winchester, "Primitive Mormonism," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 September 1889.

[42]Johnson said, "Suspicion or Knowledge of the Prophet's Plural Relation was one of the Causes of Apostasy & disruption at Kirtland although at the time there was little said publickly upon the subject." Johnson to Gibbs, 1903. See also, John Whitmer, "John Whitmer's History of the Church," chap. 20, original in the RLDS Church Archives, Independence, Missouri; and also an anonymous account in the *Warsaw Signal*, 26 April 1844, where the author says that in 1834 the "heavenly stairway" — the doctrine of spiritual wives — was located and "much excitement grew out of this measure," so it was quieted down and reemerged in 1836.

Space will permit only a brief mention of two more threads of evidence for the existence of the idea of plural marriage in Kirtland. The first is the possibility that the "whisperings" mentioned by Olney may have been in part responsible for the March 1832 mobbing incident where Smith and Rigdon were tarred and feathered. Luke Johnson, brother of a participant that evening, said that the rabble came with the intention of emasculating Smith because of supposed intimacies between him and Luke's sister, Nancy. She later became the wife of Orson Hyde and a plural wife of Joseph Smith in Nauvoo.[43] The second piece of evidence is the strong likelihood that Joseph Smith married his first plural wife in the late Kirtland period; a circumstance which apparently led to an important disruption in the relationship between Oliver Cowdery and the Prophet in 1838.[44]

The collective weight of the evidence presented above suggests that the revelations on eternal and plural marriage were not merely rationalizations for Smith's moral indiscretions or the satisfaction of his passions as some have averred. Nor does it appear that they were outgrowths of significant social dislocation caused by lengthy separations between spouses while husbands served missions, for such does not seem to be a significant factor in the early Kirtland years when these doctrines were emerging. Rather, the impression coming from a study of the pre-Nauvoo years is that the Prophet was operating on a level above passionate capriciousness, and like the rest of Mormon theology the tenets of marriage emerged from a primarily religious context. This context included Smith's work on the revision of the Bible, his intense Old Testament biblicism, and the exercise of his authority based on a perception of prophetic prerogatives which left him intellectually untrammeled. The ethics of plural marriage for Joseph Smith were summed up in his statement, "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is."[45] It seems quite clear that in Ohio Joseph Smith believed he was acting and speaking under God's direction in bringing forth these unique doctrines.

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[43]The episode is narrated by Joseph Smith in *History of the Church*, 1:261-65. Johnson's statement is in his "History of Luke Johnson," *Millennial Star* 26 (31 Dec. 1864):834, and is confirmed by George A. Smith in a discourse on 15 November 1864, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool and London, 1854-86), 11:5-6. For the assertion that intimacies between Smith and Miss Johnson may have been at the root of the mobbing see *Public Discussion of the Issues Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and The Church of Christ (Disciples)* (Lamoni: The Herald Publishing House, 1913), p. 202.

Nancy Johnson does not mention the attempted emasculation in her account, but there may be some slight intimation in her testimony: "During the whole year that Joseph was an inmate of my Father's house I never saw aught in his daily life or conversation to make me doubt his divine mission." Edward Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), p. 404.

[44]For a detailed discussion of the Cowdery-Smith rift see Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," pp. 77-86.

[45]Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:134-36. This is from a letter to Nancy Rigdon, trying to justify plural marriage to her after she had refused the Prophet's proposal. The letter was originally published by John C. Bennett in the *Sangamo Journal*, 19 August 1842. It created a furor in Nauvoo and in the Rigdon family and was very likely a significant factor in the waning of Sidney Rigdon's enthusiasm. Apparently Miss Rigdon gave the letter to her boyfriend Francis Higbee and he in turn passed it along to Bennett for publication during the latter's vociferous exposé of Mormonism after his excommunication in May 1842. For more details on the important episode see Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," pp. 238-45.